

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Subject Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group Progress Report
Committee: Cabinet
Date:
Cabinet Member: Councillor Wigens
CMT Member: Director for Development and Regeneration
Author: Ian Ellis (Assistant Network Manager) Transport and Highways
Contact: Tel: 01752 304223
e-mail: ian.ellis@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref: IE/06/11
Key Decision: N
Part: Part I

Executive Summary:

Following on from the Growth & Prosperity Scrutiny Panel's Review of Highways Maintenance in November/December 2010, a report was submitted to Cabinet on the 19th January 2011 recommending that further work be undertaken by officers to identify what, if any, of the Scrutiny recommendations would be appropriate to take forward. This report details the actions taken since that report. The recommendations and progress to date are as follows:

- 1) *that the Transport and Highways Partnership review service levels in relation to highways maintenance to improve value for money.*

Transport and Highways is currently working closely with the council's Risk and Insurance team and its solicitors to review draft proposals to change the existing highways maintenance service levels. Current proposals include altering defect response times and the frequency of highway inspections in order to undertake more permanent repairs, both first time and overall, thereby improving value for money.

Such changes may make it harder or impossible to defend claims unless a well reasoned argument can be made to depart from the Code of Practice "Well Maintained Highways". Consequently, officers are undertaking a more detailed risk assessment of the proposals, incorporating a review of detailed statistical evidence, i.e. traffic flows, insurance claims, defects etc., to ensure that they are defensible and well considered.

It is anticipated that a final proposal, will be presented to Cabinet later this financial year.

- 2) *that highways maintenance be assured of greater emphasis within the transport and highways capital programme alongside new works, but not at the expense of other areas of prioritised work;*

Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital expenditure on carriageway resurfacing and reconstruction has been increased from £1.187m in 2010/11 to £1.820m in 2011/12. These works are currently in progress as part of the Operation Upgrade campaign.

In addition to the capital expenditure, a further £610,800 revenue funding has been allocated to permanent patching works. Of this, £432,000 has been received from the Department for

Transport as part of its £200m allocation to local authorities to repair roads damaged by the recent harsh winter.

Consequently, total carriageway revenue and capital funding has been increased by £980,000 on 2010/11 budgets.

- 3) *that an Invest to Save Bid be submitted by officers to successfully secure additional capital funding;*

An Invest to Save Bid, based on reducing footway defects, is currently being considered and, subject to developing a viable business case, is likely to be submitted by the end of September 2011.

It is the hope that by making positive in-roads in to the footway maintenance back-log, the council's insurance premiums, and by extension, the Transport and Highways' insurance contributions may be significantly reduced over time. This should enable footway revenue funding to be diverted into carriageway repairs.

- 4) *that despite the current difficult economic climate and the budget position of the authority, the council should consider giving a higher priority to highway maintenance needs over and above other priorities included in the Council's Capital Programme;*

Currently the Council's Capital Programme is fully committed but the Highways team will continue to work with the Capital Delivery Board to seek additional funding in particular from external funders, e.g. commuted sums from developers and Section 106 funding.

- 5) *that the Council's Insurance Reserve be reviewed to identify whether an element could be diverted to planned preventative term maintenance instead;*

Following a review of the council's insurance reserve, it is clear that year-on-year increases in the highway contributions to the insurance reserves are due largely to the council's rising exposure to risk from highway related insurance claims. These contributions are unlikely to decrease without first reducing this risk. This may be achieved through the Invest to Save route.
